

structure rose were far removed from those of later generations, it flourished none the less where conditions favoured its growth. In spite of the ubiquity of manor and gild, there was as much difference between the life of a centre of capitalist industry, like fifteenth-century Flanders, or a centre of capitalist finance, like fifteenth-century Florence, and a pastoral society exporting raw materials and a little food, like mediaeval England, as there is between modern Lancashire or London and modern Denmark. To draw from English conditions a picture of a whole world stagnating in economic squalor, or basking in economic innocence, is as absurd as to reconstruct the economic life of Europe in the twentieth century from a study of the Shetland Islands or the Ukraine. The elements in the social theory of the Middle Ages were equally various, and equally changing. Even if the student confines himself to the body of doctrine which is definitely associated with religion, and takes as typical of it the *Summe* of the Schoolmen, he finds it in constant process of development. The economic teaching of St. Antonino in the fifteenth century, for example, was far more complex and realistic than that of St. Thomas in the thirteenth, and down to the very end of the Middle Ages the best-established and most characteristic parts of the system —for ex-

ample, the theory of
prices^a and^d of^j usury—so far
from being stationary, were steadily
modified and
elaborated.

There are, perhaps, four main attitudes
which
religious opinion may adopt toward the
world of social
institutions and economic relations. It
may stand on
one side in ascetic aloofness and regard
them as in
their very nature the sphere of
unrighteousness, from
which men *may* escape—from which, if they
consider
their souls, they *will* escape—but which
they can
conquer only by flight. It may take them
for granted
and ignore them, as matters of indifference
belonging